

NEW FOLK DANCE BOOK

DANCES OF EARLY CALIFORNIA DAYS —
LUCILLE K. CZARNOWSKI — PACIFIC BOOKS —
PALO ALTO, CAL. \$5.00

Indeed, Miss Lucille Czarnowski, made a very important contribution to the field of folk dancing and California folklore. I sincerely wish that the Californians of the present day, instead of creating all kinds of "Good Night Irene" and "Shindigger" dances, would take these as their ethnic form of dance, be the exponents of them and preserve them. California has a colorful and a rich background and Miss Czarnowski's collection of dances is like reliving the gay history of California. Her historical survey of the dance, 11 pages of reading matter, in itself is valuable. The book contains forty dances (among them are many variants of the same dance), some are party games, some are short and some are very long and all are well notated. It was also interesting to discover that about five of her dances (3 La Yucas, Danish and Seven Up) are additional versions of the popular European Raatikos and Lot Ist Todt type of dance, a dance found under various guises and names in practically all of Europe (including Lithuania - see Ratukas). One, then, can take for granted that a century ago this dance, in popularity, swept the world of the Western civilization.

JEWISH DANCE — by RUTH ZEHAVA.

To review the book of "Jewish Dances" (Los Angeles; Kilography, 1950, \$1.50) by Ruth Zehava, was a very difficult task, even tho it is beautifully done and neatly printed. Miss Zehava tells us that she "studied the dance with the world renowned master, Michel Fokine, and in the schools of Isadora Duncan, Mary Wigman, and others". In the forward and introduction she & Dr. Mordecai M. Kaplan of the Jewish Theological Seminary respectively both speak of the great Jewish heritage and the millions of Jews slain by the Nazis and one anticipates something exciting in the dance field is to follow; but, Alas! . . . Miss Zehava, no doubt is a very fine Modern dancer (perhaps Hassidic, too); she probably knows personally how to teach and inspire her charges with the required spirit of the Jewish dance; but one would never know it from the choreographies.

The stories which introduce each "creation", as told by David Bridger, are wonderful. One learns something about the customs and often the lighter side of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. The songs selected for the choreographies are melodic, contain amusing words and are typical of the East European and Hassidic Jew, and are simply and well arranged by Gershon Kingsley. With the above background one anticipates the choreography to be in keeping with the song and story; however, the dances have no relation whatever with them or with the people to whom it is dedicated, but are (for the most part) simple stuff which outside the melody are no more Jewish than the Irish Washerwomen. Anyone, without the benefit of Fokine and Wigman could do at least that much. To plague the decipherer even further, not a single description is distributed into measures, but in "phases" and one never knows whether a "phase" consists of one measure, four or eight. My other gripe is the naming a polka or two step "waltz". Without ever having studied with Fokine, to my humble knowledge, a waltz is done to three quarter time and not to two quarter.

The drawings by Edith Miller, which accompany the

(and have little to do with the dance), intend to portray East European Jewish characters and mannerism. They could have been very interesting, save for the fact that to me the facial expressions of these "characters" are silly. Had a gentile done the same drawings the "Bnai Brith" organization would condemn it as anti-Semitic. I might be all wet. This is my personal opinion. Perhaps this book was not meant to leave the confines of Jewish centers. It might be deemed as a good attempt. As the "Galitizianer" would say: "Yach zul azey visn" (I should know?).

"BECOMING AMERICAN"

A Book Review by Stephen Pearce

A very worthwhile little book has just been published under the title "Becoming American." The latest in a series of publications sponsored by the Bureau of Intercultural Education, New York, its title should be noted: it is "Becoming American," not "Becoming an American." That is, it is not a handbook for prospective citizens, but the story, in human terms, of immigration, of the adjustment problems of immigrants and of the conflicts between first-generation and second-generation Americans. Its author, Irene D. Jaworski, herself a second-generation American, uses this vital and dramatic aspect of American life as a way of exploring what being "American" means. She suggests that a true understanding of the term will bring this country nearer to the ideal of "one nation, indivisible."

The first chapter shows a family of first and second-generation Americans and the conflicts that arise as the children, in their efforts to win acceptance in their school and community, find themselves resenting the customs of their parents, which are still largely those of the Old World. "Why can't you be American?" one boy asks his mother as she speaks to him affectionately in her native tongue.

The difficulties of this family — which could be a family from almost any European country — remain in the reader's mind as he turns to the next chapters. These tell briefly but vividly the story of immigration in America in the past one hundred years — the reasons why millions of people left other countries to come here, what they felt as they left their homes, made the long journey and arrived in the new land, and how those already established here re-acted to their arrival.

With the story of immigration told, the author returns to the little family whose difficulties she presented with so much understanding in the first chapter. Those difficulties were not only the result of failure on the part of the parents to understand American customs, of failure on the part of the children to understand their parents' cultural heritage; they arose also because the school and the community failed to accept the children as entirely American.

The key to the difficulties these second-generation American children met in the school and community, the author suggests, is to be found in the sequence of events that established Anglo-American culture as the dominant one in this country and that has kept it dominant, even though Americans of British descent (Anglo-Americans) are now only the single largest group among many large groups of other cultural backgrounds. The author cites the eleven million foreign-born, the twenty-three million second-generation Americans, their foreign-language newspapers, their organizations, their churches. She reminds us that the Negroes form another

large element in our population whose culture is distinct from the Anglo-American. Cutting across differences in race and national origin are differences in religion. Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Catholics, members of Jewish congregations do not stem from the Anglo-American tradition.

The United States is therefore a country characterized by "cultural pluralism," a term which means "various ways of life," each with its special contribution to America. Nevertheless, many members of the dominant culture (and these include many who are not themselves of Anglo-American descent) still tend to act as if those of other cultures were not as truly American as themselves. This attitude is responsible for some of the social discriminations that perpetuate the existence of separate groups in this country, for some of the discriminations that affect employment opportunities, and that prevent, in many instances, a real partnership in civic life between "old stock" Americans and more recent arrivals.

Fortunately there are a growing number of people who are aware that personality traits vary from individual and are not determined by religion, nationality or race. The last chapter of "Becoming American" touches on the way these Americans, through their organizations and through the schools, are trying to correct inequalities and make possible a closer cooperation among varying groups. "Becoming American" is part of this effort. It was written primarily for high school boys and girls, but actually it has something to say to all Americans, whatever their age, whatever their origin. In the short compass of 112 pages, the author, a member of the English Department of Forest Hills High School, New York, provides a new tool for those who want to help in the great task of making our country in fact "one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

A NATIONAL FOLK DANCE FEDERATION

Ralph A. Piper, Ed. D.

President, Folk Dance Federation of Minnesota

The formation of a national organization of folk and square dance associations in the various states has been a vision and hope of the author for several years.

This feeling has been shared by many other leaders and perhaps we are ready to take action. At least the problems can be discussed and preliminary plans made at the International Square Dance Festival in the Chicago Stadium on October 28, as representative groups are expected from over twenty states.

Some of the problems involved are as follows:

1. Shall it be called a Folk Dance Federation, Square Dance Federation, or Folk and Square Dance Federation?
2. Shall it include as members only the state folk and square dance federations (now organized in California, Washington, Oregon, Arkansas, South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New Hampshire) or should smaller units be eligible for membership (such as the Southeast Oklahoma Square Dance Association, the Associated Square Dance Association of Southern California, the Sun Valley Square Dance Association of Boise, and the Square Dance Council of Houston)?
3. Shall such organizations as the Country Dance Society of America be invited to participate as regular or associate member groups?
4. Shall it include caller's and instructor's associations, such as the American Country Dance Leaders of Michigan; the Northern California, the New Jersey, Long Island, and Westchester Square Dance Caller's Associations; and the Swingmasters of Minnesota?

5. Shall the federation hold regional and or national festivals or send representatives to the National Folk Festival in St. Louis (promoted privately each year by Sarah Gertrude Knott) and the International Square Dance Festival in Chicago (under the joint sponsorship of W.L.S. and the Chicago Recreation Department)?

6. What practical functions might the federation perform other than the holding of festivals — such as establishing a central information service; publishing a national directory of folk and square dance organizations, clubs, and leaders; correspond with and arrange for exchange visits with folk dance organizations of other countries.

The presidents and chairman of all state and local organizations and other interested people are respectfully requested to give the matter careful thought and to send their reactions and suggestions to Ralph A. Piper, Professor of Physical Education, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis 14, Minnesota before October 25th. All leaders who can do so are urged to attend the Leader's Institute on the morning of October 28th at the Chicago Stadium to discuss plans.



Folk Dancing Is The Answer

After my third season of ballet, I conclude that for amateur dancer, folk dancing offers the best source for the widest enjoyment of the dance. Ballet classes are too much like fancy calisthenics, there just isn't enough genuine dancing.

I get a deep pleasure from VILTIS. I read them from one end to the other and save them. I enjoy the write-ups of the various concerts, also the special nationality issues which concentrate on one group, giving background, customs and costumes.

Louis Denov. — New Haven, Conn.

The Truth, Nothing But . . .

Your article on "Girl Trouble" provoked some mirthful laughter in the family. Frances and I still think that you have not frankly told everything. We both enjoy reading VILTIS very much — every bit of it.

Alfredo Manat. — Chicago, Ill.

Your article "How Is One To Know" was very thought provoking. So much so in fact that you'll permit me to venture a comment. First of all I want you to know that I'm on your side that the dances should be done really and truly traditionally. I've thought that way ever since I started dancing. You say that the "glorifiers" are a worse bunch than the "I don't care group", which may be true. Here is what I think — that the "I don't care group" should be more chastised more than the "glorifiers", for they will quite readily admit, when challenged, that their dances aren't really traditional; furthermore, they are not to be blamed too strongly if they honestly think that they are improving upon a dance. The "I don't care" group, very often, hasn't even anything to offer. Most of the time they are people who just want to use up energy, and since many folk dances are vigorous they do dances with the knowledge that not only they are changing the dances but also deliberately degrading them. These selfish people do all this just because they haven't ample minds to find something worth while to do. All of which puts these people in the same class as those who destroy beautiful and priceless paintings and sculpture.

Possible akin to the "glorifiers" is another group that believes each generation has so much right to add